

The Pittsylvania Packet

Winter 2004

Number 51



Pittsylvania Historical Society

Chatham, Virginia

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Retiring President's Report

I would like to take this means to express my thanks for the support that I have had as president of the Pittsylvania Historical Society. I am looking forward to working with the new President Langhorne Jones as the society continues to support positive projects in the community.

- Fuller Motley, Former President

Note Regarding Tax Deductions

All dues, contributions and donations to the Society are tax deductible per IRS Code, Section - 501 (C) (3). This covers membership dues also.

All contributions are much appreciated.

Remember to Renew!

If you have not already done so, please renew today! Membership fees and information is listed on the back cover.

New President's Report

As your newly-elected president of the Pittsylvania Historical Society I look forward to an exciting term. The coming few years are going to be very stimulating and challenging for us all. Among the many projects underway by the Society, there is room for everyone to participate and I encourage each of you to contribute as much as you can to the projects.

We have the upcoming renovation of the Chatham Train Station to look forward to. The

ongoing Veteran History project goes hand in hand with the Train Station to form a Veteran Center and Museum. Involvement in these projects will be open to each of you should you wish to participate.

The 1813 Clerk's Office's exhibits are in a the midst of reorganization with professional guidance from John V. Quarstein of Hampton, Virginia. We are making progress with the help of volunteers and we always welcome new helpers.

The Callands Potpourri, under the guidance of Mack Doss for the past 23 years, was a great success again this year with the attendance of some 8,000 visitors enjoying excellent crafts and food on a beautiful fall day. This event is planned again for 2004.

Our annual Membership Drive is underway now and I encourage your renewal and efforts to sign up new members. Your dues help publish and mail the *Packet* to you every quarter and carry on our many interesting projects.

Come visit at the January meeting. We have an interesting program in store for you.

- Langhorne Jones, Jr., President

Corrections

In the Fall Issue of the *Pittsylvania Packet* on p. 17, Bess W. Patton's name was incorrectly given as Bessie M. Patton. On page 16, Bessie Vining's place of birth was incorrectly given as Columbia, Marion County, Mississippi; instead, Bessie Vining's place of *marriage* was *Columbus*, Marion County, Mississippi.

Winter Meeting on January 19th: Bill Black is Planned Speaker

The Pittsylvania Historical Society will hold its Fall Meeting Monday, January 19th, 2004, 7:30 p.m., at the 1813 Clerk's Office.

Bill Black, the planned speaker, will speak on the 110-year history of Chatham Hall. Mr. Black is the Chatham Hall historian, and also teaches English and heads an independent study program at the school. He is currently writing a history of Chatham Hall.

Danville Civil War Encampment February 20th-22nd, 2004

The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts and History will host their annual Civil War Encampment and their 139th Anniversary Celebration of Danville as the Last Capital of the Confederacy on the grounds of the historic Sutherlin Mansion on February 20th-22nd.

For more information, contact the Danville Museum of Fine Arts and History, 975 Main St., Danville, VA 24541; Phone: 434-793-5644; Website: <http://www.danvillemuseum.org> .

Deadline Extended for Heritage Book Submissions and Orders

The deadline for submissions and orders for the Heritage Book has been extended to February 28th, 2004. Contact the Pittsylvania Heritage Book, P. O. Box 185, Ringgold, VA 24586, 434-822-6671 for more details. (Information provided by the *Star-Tribune*.)

Whitmell Farm Life School Materials Loaned to PHS

by Glenn Giles

The Historical Society has been given access to a box of material relating to the Whitmell Farm Life School. This is an extensive collection of newspaper clippings, photographs, and school event programs from the school and Whitmell community covering the years of the school's existence between 1918 and 1964. Much of the material relates to the accomplishments and teaching philosophy of the school's long time principal, Archie (Mrs. F. C.) Beverley. Mrs. Beverley was principal from 1918 to 1951. Most noteworthy are two holographs by Mrs. Beverley describing the history of the school and her unique educational ideals.

This collection represents many years of work completed by the Committee for Preservation of Artifacts. Isla Stowe is chairperson of this committee. Other committee members include Ester Pollack, Garnett Francis, Virginia Collie, Linda Heldreth, Kathleen Phillips (deceased), and C. A. "Buddy" Pritchett (deceased).

The Historical Society will make an effort to catalog this material and find a way to create a scrapbook or some other method for a public display. The material would be an excellent resource for a person to utilize for a graduate thesis. The Society welcomes volunteers who wish to contribute their time or financial resources to this project.

Archie Swanson Beverley was a nationally renowned educator and the work she accomplished in the Whitmell community is still being felt through the lives of those who attended that school and their families. Pittsylvania County is a better place today because of this remarkable lady.

New Board and Committee Members Announced

Cynthia Hewitt, Henry Hurt, Desmond Kendrick, and Sarah E. Mitchell have joined the Pittsylvania Historical Society Board.

In addition, Bill Black, Lindy Conner, Nancy Meadows, Joe Rogers, and Chris Smith have agreed to assist on various committees.

Pittsylvania Historical Society Pays for Restoration of Historic Books

The Pittsylvania Historical Society is proud to announce that it has paid for the restoration of the Pittsylvania County 1793-1806 Land Tax Record Book and the 1838-1839 Deed Book No. 42.

The Pittsylvania County Courthouse houses land records dating back to the 1730's; tithable and tax information dating back to the 1760's; marriage and court records dating back to the 1760's; birth and death information from the mid-1800's to the late 1800's; assorted Revolutionary War, Civil War, World War I, and World War II records; as well as many other records.

Many of the old record books in the Pittsylvania County Courthouse need restoration. If you are able to help, please send checks to the Pittsylvania Historical Society, P. O. Box 1148, Chatham, VA 24531, and note on the check that the gift is for "Courthouse Book Restoration." All gifts are tax-deductible.

Fashion Advice from The *Pittsylvania Tribune*, July 31st, 1903

Provided by Linda Yeatts Brown
Compiled by Sarah E. Mitchell

The *Pittsylvania Tribune*, Vol XXXIV, No. 5 featured a great deal of fashion advice for the ladies of Pittsylvania County.

A column entitled "For Woman's Benefit" was reprinted from the *Pittsburg Dispatch*. The cost of a millinery bill for a season is an amazing amount, considering that at the time a moderately-sized home could be built for \$1,000 to \$4,000. It is to be hoped that the cost of hats here in Pittsylvania County was less than in many other areas!

"As for the money that the American woman pays the milliner, this is a subject almost too distressing to be mentioned, if one happens to be talking with a man who pays the bills. . . . A \$100 hat is no uncommon thing, neither is a \$2000 millinery bill for the season.

"A hat of the moment may be trimmed with sweeping ostrich plumes held in place by jeweled buckles."

An article entitled "Frills of Fashion" gives more information on the fads of the day. It is interesting to note how much influence French fashion had:

"Genuine coins are utilized for hatpin tops and brooches. The head of the coin is brought out in three-quarter relief.

"Incrustations of lace medallions or of

printed silk flowers are among the most popular decorations on summer dresses.

“Parisian modistes are making smart little coats of white embroidered sailcloth, to wear with accordion pleated voile skirts and lace blouses. . . .

“Tasseled frames for waist bags represent a Parisian fad. The tassels of metal, in delicately wrought designs, are attached as pendants to the lower edge of the frames.

“Dyed oats have recently been introduced in millinery garniture. Combined with daisies, poppies and cornflowers they have been employed for the decoration of Tuscan toques and plateaus. . . .

“Sleeves are now growing more and more baggy, the whole of the bagginess coming at the wrist. The fulness begins at the elbow, then grows greater and greater until it falls in a great bag-like fulness, almost over the hand. Fashion says that in the fall the fulness will move upward toward the shoulder and that the leg o’mutton is returning.”

The article also described fabrics. I have a feeling that lace, gauze, and silk, while lovely, were not easy to care for! We can be grateful that today’s ladies have the option of machine wash and dry.

“Guipure lace retains its popularity and ochre is the favorite tint. . . . Valenciennes lace in an ecru tint is much in demand for millinery use. . . . Peau de laine is a rival to peau de soie, the wool having been woven into the same leather-like surface as the silk, and both show off colors to great perfection. . . .

“Exquisite costumes have been developed in painted gauze, and a beautiful example is in white, decorated with purple [iris] and foliage. Pansy colored satin formed the belt and long sash-ends and cherry silk was used for a lining.”

Dolley Madison and the Coles Family of Virginia

*Excerpted in portions from Anne Hollingsworth Wharton, **Social Life in the Early Republic**, J. Lippincott Company, Philadelphia, 1902, pp. 133-141. Editing and notes by Henry H. Mitchell. Research assistance by Sarah E. Mitchell.*

Edward Coles

Edward Coles, who had been private secretary to Mr. [Thomas] Jefferson, retained his position under his successor [James Madison] until he was sent by Mr. Madison as special ambassador to Russia. Mr. Coles, one of Mrs. [Dolley] Madison's numerous Virginia cousins, was a man of much more than ordinary ability and breadth of view. After his return from Russia, being conscientiously opposed to slavery, Mr. Coles removed to Illinois and there freed the large number of slaves that he had inherited from his father, giving each head of a family one hundred and sixty acres of land. He was afterwards elected governor of Illinois and thus prevented the pro-slavery faction in that State from gaining control. Edward Coles passed the last years of his life in Philadelphia, where he helped to found the Republican party.

Col. John Coles and His Daughters Sally, Emily, and Elizabeth

Mr. William C. Preston recorded in his journal [an] experience when he went to the White House as a young man to pay his respects to the President and Mrs. Madison. When he entered the drawing-room, which was brilliant with uniforms and gay toilettes, overwhelmed with embarrassment, he would gladly have retreated from the unaccustomed scene, but Mrs. Madison had observed him, and advanced towards him, magnificent in high turban and stiff brocade, her snuff-box in one hand, the other extended cordially towards her young guest, with the question, "Are you William Campbell Preston, the son of my old friend and most beloved kinswoman, Sally Campbell? Sit down, my son, for you are my son, and I am the first person who ever saw you in this world." Turning then with a graciousness which charmed the young man, she introduced him to the circle of young girls about her, giving some special clue to each, and ending with "your kinswoman, Sally Coles."

The tales that have come down from that dim past are simple and homely, only worthy to be recorded because they prove once more that whatever may have been this woman's beauty or grace, the secret of her success was to be found in the quickness of her perceptions and the warmth of her heart. These qualities, with a certain enthusiasm that she brought to her social duties, created an atmosphere of homelike comfort and enjoyment wherever she appeared.

The Sally Coles to whom Mrs. Madison presented young Preston was the daughter of Colonel John Coles of Enniscorthy, one of her near relatives. It is related of Colonel Coles, who was a genial, horse-loving, hospitable Virginia gentleman of the old school, that in recounting his blessings he

would speak with pride of the ability of his sons, adding, like the French poet Martial, that he was glad his daughters were not too learned. Colonel Coles's felicitations are rather amusing, given the fact that these daughters, whether learned or not according to the code of their day, proved themselves capable of filling with grace and distinction prominent positions in social and diplomatic circles.

Eliza Coles married Colonel Richard Singleton, of South Carolina, Emily married Governor Rutherford, of Virginia, while Sally, Mrs. Madison's favorite, became the wife of Andrew Stevenson, who was afterwards Speaker of the House of Representatives and minister to England under President Van Buren.

It is evident that Sally Coles was a frequent visitor at the White House, as there are many references to her in Mrs. Madison's letters.

Col. Isaac Coles

Another of Mrs. Madison's numerous Virginia cousins was Colonel Isaac Coles, of Halifax County. Colonel Coles was elected a delegate to the First Congress, and again represented his State from 1793 to 1797.

While in New York, attending the sessions of Congress, Colonel [Isaac] Coles met Miss Catherine Thompson, a daughter of Mr. James Thompson and a sister of Mrs. Elbridge Gerry. Bishop Meade recorded that Colonel Coles and Miss Thompson were married by Bishop Provoost in 1790. When his services in Congress were concluded, Colonel Coles took his young wife to his large estates in Halifax and Pittsylvania counties. He held no official position in the new capital [of Washington, D. C.],

but it is to be hoped that Colonel and Mrs. Coles sometimes visited their Cousin [Dolley] in the White House, as both were well-fitted to enjoy social life.

Colonel [Isaac] Coles has been described as a man of agreeable, courtly manners and a delightful raconteur. Mrs. Coles, who had been a belle and a beauty, accustomed to a large and gay circle of friends in New York and to the society of the most cultivated and refined men and women of the day during her residence in Philadelphia, must have found her life in a sparsely-settled district in strange contrast with her previous surroundings.

To these new conditions the young woman adapted herself with spirit and enthusiasm. In addition to the cares of her large family and the duties which in those days devolved upon the mistress of a plantation, Mrs. Coles assisted Bishop Meade to establish an Episcopal Church, the first in Halifax County [see note below]. The services were, said the bishop, often held in Mrs. Coles's house.

Notes

Portraits of Edward Coles, Catherine Thompson (Mrs. Isaac) Coles, and Ann Thompson (Mrs. Elbridge) Gerry can be found in the online version of this article at:

<http://www.victorianvilla.com/sims-mitchell/local/coles/isaac/sler/>

Maud Carter. Clement states in *The History of Pittsylvania County, Virginia* (1929) that the Thompson sisters were English, and notes that their brother Jacob Thompson was a member of the Queen's Guard. The names Elbridge Gerry and Jacob Thompson have been given to male offspring in the Coles family of Pittsylvania County, Virginia, down to the present era.

On p. 201 of her *History* (see previous note), Mrs. Clement observes that "when the question of slavery came before Congress, Col. [Isaac] Coles of Virginia voted to abolish the practice of slavery, while his brother-in-law Elbridge Gerry of Massachusetts voted to retain the same."

Dolley Madison's mother Mary Coles Payne was a double-first-

cousin of both the abovementioned Col. Coles' brothers of Virginia: Col. John Coles of Albemarle County, and Col. Isaac Coles of Halifax and Pittsylvania Counties. The double-first-cousin relationship occurred because brothers William Coles (Mary's father) and John Coles (Col. John and Col. Isaac's father) had married sisters Lucy Winston and Mary Ann Winston. A third Winston sister Sarah married John Henry, and thus their son the patriot Patrick Henry was also a first cousin of Mary Coles Payne, Col. Isaac Coles, and Col. John Coles. Edward Coles (mentioned in the Wharton text above), secretary to Jefferson and Madison and governor of Illinois, was a son of Col. John Coles of Albemarle County, and thus a brother of Sally, Emily, and Eliza.

A third Coles brother (of Col. Isaac and Col. John), Walter, married Mildred Lightfoot, and therefore their children were also Dolley's double-second-cousins. Among them was Sarah "Sally" Coles (not to be confused with her above-mentioned first cousin Sally), who married James Bruce of Halifax County. Their son James Coles Bruce expanded his father's home into the famed Greek Revival edifice Berry Hill along the Dan River in Halifax County. When Sarah Coles Bruce died, her husband married Elvira Cabell Henry, widow of Patrick Henry, Jr. (Sarah Coles Bruce's second cousin). James and Elvira Henry Bruce had a son Charles Bruce (therefore half-brother of James Coles Bruce) who built the also well-known Gothic "castle" Staunton Hill along the Staunton River in Charlotte County.

Many of the given names of the Coles family are used in multiple generations, and multiple times within the same generation, a practice not uncommon for the era, but leading to many temporary puzzles for the modern researcher.

The Dolley Madison Project website at the University of Virginia discusses the various family relationships of individuals appearing in Madison White House documents; for example, Isaac Coles is listed as Dolley Madison's uncle. The designation "uncle" is not necessarily in error, as it is often colloquially used in recognition of the fact that a double-first-cousin relationship is genetically similar to that of a sibling.

Maud Carter Clement's "Antrim Parish, Halifax County 1752-1767" seems to call into question author Whartons' assertion regarding the "first" Episcopal Church in Halifax County.

For more regarding Mrs. Madison, see Patricia B. Mitchell, "Dolley Payne Madison: A Belle of a Washington Hostess," *Pittsylvania Packet*, Spring 1992, pp. 12-13.

Four of the homes of the children of Isaac and Catherine Coles still exist in Pittsylvania County: The Oaks (home of son Dr. Robert Coles) in Chatham; The Columns (its early portion was the home of daughter Mary Coles Whittle) in Chatham; Coles Hill (home of son Walter Coles) east of Chatham; and Elkhorn (home of son Jacob Thompson Coles) east of Chatham.

Pittsylvania County's Communities in the 1880's: Part I

The following descriptions of Pittsylvania's towns and communities comes from an 1881-1882 *Danville City Directory*. Herman Melton provided copies from the book to the society. The editor plans to print more of the descriptions in later editions of the *Packet*.

Notes: the abbreviations used in the original document were copied. Evidently, P M stood for Postmaster. The abbreviation for general merchandise varied from genl mdse to gen mdse. The Virginia Midland Railroad was shortened to Va Mid Ry. Wm was the shortened form of William; Benj was the abbreviated form of Benjamin.

Design

A new office; has a population of about one hundred; is three miles north of Danville near the Va Mid Ry; has one church and one school, one saw mill and one general store. Mails daily.

P. D. Fuller, P M

Ellwingo, J J, saw mill

Fuller, Wm B. genl mdse and notary public

Holmes, C C, shoemaker

Keen, Benj, blacksmith

Keen, M, boarding house

Lumpkins, W H, constable

McDearman, J M, justice of the peace

Dry Fork Depot

Only a way station and a farmers' post office.

Elba

At the junction of the Va. Mid. and the Franklin & Pittsylvania Narrow-Gauge R. R. [railroad], ten miles north of Chatham, the Court House, and twenty-five from Danville. It is quite a business [sic] little place of perhaps a hundred and fifty inhabitants; had one church, one school, one saw mill, livery stable and two boarding houses, besides several stores in and near. Mails received twice daily north and south.

A. H. Tardy, P M

Anderson, R J, saw mill
Bailey, J G Rev, Methodist
Burks, Lewis E, genl mdse
Coleman, R H, carpenter
Feagins, George, saloon
Feagins, Geo Mrs, boarding
Grasty, J B, photographer
Holt, H E Mrs, boarding house
Jones, Jacob, blacksmith
Jones, Paul, saloon
Payne, W W, railroad agent
Talbott, Thomas, shoemaker
Tardy, A H, notary public
Tardy, A H & S C, gen mdse

Fall Creek Depot

A way station on the Va. Mid. Ry., twelve miles south of Chatham Court House, and six from Danville. Mail daily.

James T. Clark, P M

Adkins, John, shoemaker
Clark, Jas T, justice of peace
Fountain, Wm, grist mill

Robertson, Wm S, physician
Walker, W, blacksmith
Withers & Clark, genl mdse

Galveston

See Elba or Franklin Junction.

Hill Grove

An inconsiderable little place of some seventy-five inhabitants.

Allen, T J, constable
Creasy & Bro, genl mdse
Creasty, T C, genl mdse
Dillard, E J, mill
Dillard, Henry, blacksmith
Doss, James, wheelwright
Hawkins, J A, carpenter
Ivy, Wm H, carpenter
Lemon, H S, physician
Pugh, W T, shoemaker
Starky, G W, tanner
Stamps & Creasy, blacksmiths
Vaughan, A J, genl mdse
Worsham, Henry, mill

Deadline for Submissions

Please submit any announcements, articles, etc. for the next issue of *The Pittsylvania Packet* by the week of March 15, 2004. Queries and letters from our readers are always welcome!

Books, Etc. For Sale

To order, send check or money order to: Pittsylvania Historical Society, Book Orders, P. O. Box 1148, Chatham, Virginia 24531. All prices include postage.

Maud Carter Clement, *History of Pittsylvania County, Virginia*, reprinted in hardcover. \$24.00.

Maud Carter Clement, *War Recollections of the Confederate Veterans of Pittsylvania County, Virginia 1861 - 1865*, softcover. \$12.00.

Roger Dodson, *Footprints From the Old Survey Books*, softcover. \$12.00.

Madelene Fitzgerald, *Pittsylvania Homes and History of the Past*, hardcover. \$20.00.

Madelene Fitzgerald and Frances Hurt, *Eighteenth Century Landmarks of Pittsylvania County, Virginia*, softcover. \$12.00,

Frances Hurt, *An Intimate History of the American Revolution in Pittsylvania County*, Illustrated and Fully indexed, hardcover. \$17.00.

Kenyon McCann, *A Cruel Wind Blowing*, Author's sequel to *Ride into Darkness*. Historical novel set in Pittsylvania County. Softcover. \$13.50.

Herman Melton, editor, *Old Fast & Perfect: Sketches from the 54 Year Life of the Franklin & Pittsylvania Railroad 1878 - 1932*. 28 pages, softcover. \$3.75,

Herman Melton, *Pittsylvania County's Historic Courthouse: The Story Behind Ex Parte Virginia and the Making of a National Landmark*. Softcover, indexed, illustrated. \$13.00.

Herman Melton, *Thirty-Nine Lashes Well Laid On*. 400 pages, Hardcover, indexed. \$24.00.

Herman Melton, *Picks, Tracks, and Bauteaux*. Hardcover. \$24.00.

Mary Catherine Plaster, editor, *Idle Hens Don't Lay*. Historical Cookbook. Softcover, \$11.93.

Gray's Map of Chatham, Virginia 1878. Rare, full color print, suitable for framing. Many names and features. \$3.50.